St Harrison D-4 (1813-1934) 1934 MI Middle East
Bedouin 1834

spacious chafes his spirit and he looks with contempt and pity on the poor creatures that are willing to spend their days in the narrow confines of a town. This pity is for the cultivator and equally for the land-owner and the merchant, who so far worship their bodies that they will swathe them in silk and deck them with gold, a thing permissible for women, but contemptible for a man. The hardest work of the desert Arab is concerned with leading his flocks and with breaking up and repitching camp. As a result, he develops a great distaste for manual labor. He regards it as degrading, and no small amount of his dislike for life in a town rests on that fact. Digging up the ground, patiently caring for plants and crops, and all the work of the agriculturist he looks on as beneath him. Free men were created for something better than that.

It is the impression of a stranger to the country that not a blade of grass or a single date palm could be raised in all Arabia except in the oases where the gardeners work. The Arabs tell us that this is far from the truth. There are many places where water can be found close to the surface and where gardening could be carried on profitably. In connection with the *Akhuuu* movement of puritan Wahabi Mohammedanism that has swept over all inland Arabia in the last few years, one of the efforts of the leaders has been to settle a certain number of the new converts in towns and villages. Altogether some sixty-five new settlements have been started since the inception of the movement. Doubtless most of these are very small, but there are a few of considerable size, and two or three are small cities of perhaps five thousand inhabitants. The Arabs insist that there are many other such places, where communities might spring up

St Hartman D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East Bedouin 19.54

if the Bedouins were willing to settle down to that sort of existence.

But the Bedouin, even though he knows of these places, does not care to give up his free desert life for the hard and disagreeable labor of the towns. He is faithful to his camels, and to his goats and sheep if he is fortunate enough to have them. He loves these animals and not one of them lacks a personal name. The little lambs and kids will be carried in his arms when the road is rocky or steep. The work of a cultivator, however, he hates, and he will nearly starve before descending to such a level as to engage in it. He looks down upon the townsmen with a lofty scorn and thinks of their hard labor as unworthy of men, fit rather for animals. This remarkable man regards himself as heaven's favorite, and he exhibits a contempt for the rest of the world and a satisfaction with himself and his life that would be sublime if they were not terribly pathetic.

Yet far from being ridiculous this Bedouin of the desert is one of the most splendid figures of our time. Out of that fearful poverty which amounts to constant semi-starvation, out of a lack of cleanliness that is continual degradation of the spirit, out of an isolation and an ignorance that make him a provincial in spite of himself, he stands as the world's supreme example of that Liberty, Equality and Fraternity that have been the dream of the ages. Tied down and limited by the lack of all material things, his spirit looks on them with indifference and cheerful contempt and pines away only when immersed in the obese and self-satisfied materialism of the town. He rises triumphant over his environment by the sheer strength of his spirit. Ignorant of all the wis-

I. Dickson G-9 (1929-47) 1951 MS I Kuwait
Bedouins 1950

to, and the type may be called, for lack of a better description, Bedawin in the transition stage to a more settled existence.

These 'Arabdar, certainly in Kuwait, usually have large flocks of sheep, and only a few camels to give them milk and move their tents as they follow the grazing. Many of them are of good Shariff stock such as 'Ajman, Mutair, 'Utaiba and Harb 'Arabdar; and their members go and come from the towns to their original tribes, and regularly intermarry with their desert cousins.

The good 'Arabdawi is not necessarily looked down upon by the pure Bedawin, especially if he is of good stock, but the latter undoubtedly think him rather a soft sort of semi-townsman, who has grown rich in the service of a town ruler, and prefers the flesh-pots of *leather* life to the real hardships of the desert. They, the 'Arabdawi, are in short a sort of half-Bedawin, to be made use of by the pure-bred article, when the latter comes up to town to purchase his needs. The Arabdawi is also a useful go-between in business transactions involving sheep and camels, and at all times is rather proud to act as host and put up his Bedawin brother who asks for a night's lodging in the city.

Abalama al Bada, is a common cry heard among the 'Arabdawin of Kuwait, yet they get prestige and honour among their neighbours, whenever they put up these desert cousins, especially their shaikhs. These half-Bedawin 'Arabdar are generally powerful, for war does not pay them. As their wealth lies in their sheep rather than in their camels, there is no inducement for them to raid, and lift other people's camels, the temptation *par excellence* of the Bedawin rider, who is himself so vulnerable. Nevertheless, the 'Arabdawi is an excellent fighting man if it comes to supporting his shaikh or defending the town he depends on.

There is yet another desert dweller who must not be confused with either the pure Bedawin nomad, or his 'Arabdar cousin. This is the tribal desert shepherd, whose job in life is to care for the sheep either of the town dwellers or of the more well-to-do tribal shaikhs. As sheep cannot keep pace with camel migrations, and the areas in which they can graze are much more circumscribed or narrowly defined than those wandered over by the camel tribes, a class of shepherds has evolved, who move in areas of their own, but who are allied to

I. Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 950 942.7 K

235 or form part of the normal camel tribes, or have much of their own
665 and roam the outer desert in various formed tribal bodies. These
679 shepherd tribes are known under the general term of *Shawâwi* (singular: *Shâwi*) by town dwellers, or *Hadra* in the desert.

235 For example, in North-East Arabia we have the following:
679 (a) The great *Shawâwi* or *Hadra* shepherd tribes of the Mutaiḥ confederation on the Euphrates, who for seven months in the year move south into the great desert and only return with the advent of the late weather. These in origin were the shepherds who looked after the flocks and herds of the Al Sa'adun hereditary Shaikhs of the Muntafiq in bygone days, but who to-day for the most part own their own stock. (See Chapter XLV.)

(b) The *Hirâdin* or *Shawâwi* tribes of the Mamlr, a more or less serf-community owing allegiance to that great tribe of nomads.

(c) The *'Awagîn Ahl al Ghanam*, or people of the sheep, who care for the flocks of the camel sections of their tribe and are in closest touch with them. These 'Awagîn shepherd tribes by no means confine their attention to caring for their own, or their camel herdsmen's sheep. They are such good shepherds and so well trusted that many of them come up to Kuwait to hire themselves out to those townsfolk who own sheep, and even take those sheep many miles south and graze them with their own in the Suda region and 100 miles south of Kuwait town, where water is plentiful when summer sets in. Being honest in the extreme, they hold it a matter of tribal pride to account faithfully for every animal so entrusted to them.

The true Badawin nomads (*Bidûs*) breed only camels, and for nine months in the year dwell in the interior of the far desert places, far away from civilization and towns, where the best grazing after the winter rains is to be found. Their object is to find the best grazing grounds, irrespective of water; this means the ground which has been rained upon. With the first signs of autumn, therefore, they anxiously look out for signs of rainstorms in the distant skies, indicated by lightning flashes at night, low down on the horizon, and they make for those areas, as if life depended on it. The bustard, the gazelle and other wild animals obey the same instinct.

679 These Badawin proper are entirely exclusive, and look upon them-
665 selves as the very salt of the earth, marrying only with exclusive

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CHAPTER XLI

The Sulubba

The word *Sulubba* is a generic term. The singular of the name is *Sulubbi*, and the plural *Sulaib*.

Much has been written about this low-class tribe, or more properly community.

They are found all over the northern half of the Arabian Desert roughly from a line drawn east and west through Medina and Riyadh in the south, to another line drawn from Aleppo to Mosul.

In the south they are more despised and looked down on than in the north, and their worldly possessions are less.

Practically every tribe within the area described has a community of Sulubba living with it, as they are found useful as members of posts and parties, hunters and trackers.

Chief among the Sulubba's characteristics is their uncanny knowledge of the secret water-holes of the country they live in. They are valued for this knowledge by the tribe which protects them, as it is a great asset in war, and most useful on long raids. Some Sulaib, for this reason, are nearly always taken with a raiding party.

Similarly a Sulubbi hunter is nearly always to be found in the entourage of a shaikh, as he usually knows better than others where gazelle and ostrich are to be found.

The Sulubba are said to be Muslims, but few pray properly, and it would probably be true to say that they possess no religion, except when it is diplomatic to appear to have one as in Najd and Kuwait.

The Sulubba men are in general a miserable fawning lot; they affect endearing and diminutive Arab terms of address, and are cringing in their manner.

Both men and women are good-looking above the average, especially the women, among whom there are often very pretty girls indeed. Their usually half-starved appearance is repellent, and gives colour to the Arab story that they eat offal and "animals they find dead".

b Durham G-6 (1929-47) 951 Ad I Kuwait

A Subbiba Dance

black tents, moving about by the aid of donkeys which seem to form their only visible means of support. These Iraq Kaulyahs are thieves, bad characters, fortune-tellers, are versed in the art of palmistry of sorts, and last but not least their women are in demand for performing the operation of "circumcision of female babies", a rite which is widely practised in Southern Iraq, and among the Montefiq tribes of the Euphrates and Beni Tamim Aqaïl.

DESCRIPTION OF A SUBBIBA DANCE

(seen on 3rd June, 1934, at Kuwait)

The dance took place in the Subbiba Encampment near Qasr Naif just *inside* the Naif Gate. The occasion was the three days' feasting preceding the circumcision of a male child. For two days dancing had taken place, but the third day was reserved for the best and biggest show.

The usual cross with half a woman's *shawl* hanging to it or draped over it was in its place over the tent which was rejoicing, a sign to all and everyone that a dance was to take place.

The chief performer and master of ceremonies combined was an elderly man whose child had just been circumcised. He entered the arena formed by Subbibas male and female and other onlookers, waving a sword round his head and inviting the Subbibi maidens and Subbibi braves to come and join him. Presently, after marching round the human circle several times, there was a stir and from a

neighbouring tent a pretty young lass decked out in her festal garments (saffron, violet or green covered with her voile *shawl*), dashed into the circle, bare-headed and bare-faced with her tresses all undone

that the Sulubba believe that they originated from the Hasa Province, on the Persian Gulf, but I have not heard this story. The few Sulubba I have asked usually replied that they came from an old people who were not Moslems. I imagine, however, that this was merely conjectural; I would not attribute these answers to ancient tradition. Two Sulubba once surprised me by saying that they were descended from Crusaders! But on pressing them for the origin of their statement, they admitted that they had been told so by a French officer in Syria!

101 The Sulubba are to be found in an area extending roughly from Damascus to Mosul in the north, down to Jauf, east of the Nefud, Hail, Persian Gulf, the Euphrates, the Tigris above Baghdad, and Mosul.

101 They are scarcely ever found in Trans-Jordan west of the Wadi Sirhan; I believe that they do not exist in the Hejaz or in the western half of Arabia. This distribution might reinforce the legend of their origin from Hasa Province on the Persian Gulf, from which they might well have emigrated north to the more fertile lands in Syria or Iraq, but would have been unlikely to have emigrated to the Hejaz, which is less fertile than the Hasa itself.

563 The Sulubba have long been regarded by the Beduins as a subject race. Many of them work as tinkers for the Beduin tribes and perform other menial duties. They have never taken part in the wars and feuds, which have occupied the greater part of the Beduins' lives for centuries. A Sulubbi, like a woman, was a creature with whom it was too inferior to fight. The Sulubba maintained a strict neutrality in raids, and, for fear of being beaten, told all raiders what they knew of the nature of the country and the movements of their enemies.

[illegible] camps move to the Euphrates, or on to the rain groups of wells around which cluster tented towns of hundreds of families, odd Sulubba families will remain far out in the desert, drinking from some tiny water hole in a lonely ravine known only to the Sulubba themselves. There they will live almost the lives of wild animals, with only a few sheep or donkeys, hunting gazelle and often dressing in their skins.

The Sulubba alone knows the wild animal life of the desert intimately. As a gazelle hunter, his skill is incredible, and many live very largely on gazelle meat and dress in their skins. The Beduins often employ the Sulubba as guides in the desert or consult them regarding routes, grazing, or camping grounds.

Apart from hunting gazelle, and menial work for the Beduins, the Sulubba also live by grazing and breeding animals. Some of them are prosperous and own large flocks of sheep. They have a few camels, but their most distinctive possessions are the white asses. Probably the Sulubba originally bred asses rather than camels for riding purposes, because if they had any good camels the Beduins were likely to covet them. But since no Beduin would stoop to ride an ass, the Sulubba were left in undisputed possession. Some of these animals have marvellously swift paces, and are almost as capable of resisting thirst as is the camel.

During the last ten years, the desert belonging to Iraq, Syria, and Trans-Jordan has been brought under Government control. As a result the Beduins are no longer able to bully the Sulubba quite as unrestrainedly as before and the latter are learning to complain to the police when they are beaten or abused.

In 1919-22, the recrudescence of Wahhabism in central Arabia produced a tremendous outburst

woman. Their mode of life is very much like
343 that of other Anaiza Beduins (not like Sulubba), but owing to the taint in their blood, no Bedouin tribe will intermarry with them.

OTHER BASE-BORN TRIBES

While the Sulubba are the lowest of the ignoble tribes, they are not alone. Arabia is full of base-born tribesmen, with whom the "thoroughbred" Beduin will not intermarry.

Hasim

These people seem to be a tribe of almost
344 as low standing as the Sulubba. They do not, however, work as tinkers or hunters, but live a pastoral life, like the Beduins. The Hasim live around Jauf or with the Ruwalla.

Sherarat

They live principally around Jauf, where they are collected into a considerable tribe, but members of the Sherarat are found scattered among the Ruwalla, Beni, Bakhr, Huwaitat, and
345 Shammar. Among these tribes the Sherarat perform the menial tasks of servants and herdsmen.

The origin of the Sherarat is unknown. They are not as debased as the Sulubba, but they are
342 far inferior to the Beduins. Their tents are
515 usually very small and ragged, and their clothing even dirtier and much scantier than that of the ordinary Beduin.

ordinary Bedoin. While the Beduin is very jealous of his dignity in public, the Sherari is often prepared to make himself ridiculous for the amusement of his betters or in hopes of a reward. He is sometimes quite amusing, and is famous for his rather vulgar and undignified but irrepressible and often pointed witticisms (rather like the London cockney).

Like the Sulubba, the Sherarat, who are more intimate with the desert than the real Beduins, are excellent guides. They too prefer to spend the summer far away in the desert, beside some distant water-hole known only to themselves. It is not uncommon to meet a Sherari and his wife with a flock of camels deep in the desert, with no tent and no gear, living on the milk of the camels and sleeping in the open. The Beduins require more luxury, and after living thus for a short time, begin to want food, coffee, and a tent.

While the Sherarat thus bear a good deal of resemblance to the Sulubba socially, unlike the latter they carry arms and defend themselves from attack. Until recently, however, they paid tribute to the Beduins in whose areas they encamped. Sherarat, living as servants with Beduins, will accompany their masters on raiding parties, something to which the Sulubba were prohibited.

During the past decade in the Jauf area, Ibn Saud has aimed at raising the status of the Sherarat, doubtless with a view to increasing his fighting men.

The Sherarat, who own great numbers of camels, used to be famous for the quality of their swift riding camels. Although some individuals are comparatively wealthy, they spend very little, live only in tiny tents, wear ragged clothes, and beg, cadge, or hire themselves out as laborers or servants.

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BEDOUINS M34

greater Emirs or the Grand Sherif. These tribes are not only controlled to some extent and directed to a common policy, but also have a tradition of self-respect, which ensures the observance of the Bedouin code of hospitality. As Doughty has well said, what stands to a Bedouin for religion is that which men will think of him. Fortunately the fame of a lavish entertainer and a protector of the guest is a condition of nobility among Bedouins; and an appeal against any action inconsistent with this will seldom be disregarded. A properly authorized stranger, whatever his creed, should have little to fear under ordinary circumstances among such tribes as the Shammar, the Ateibah, the Wuld 'Ali, or the Ruwcilah.

What, however, does proper authority mean to the ordinary Bedouin? Not the exhibition of any passport or other written document. Letters from the chief Emirs, the Grand Sherif, or other great sheikhs are very valuable if the traveller is passing from one of them to another; but in ninety out of a hundred desert camps he will find no one who can read or will respect paper. The one thing needful is a *rafiq*, i.e. a companion derived from the tribe through whose range one must pass, or from some tribe allied with it or authorized to share its range. If possible, he should be a man of importance whose face will be recognized instantly by the desert men—a race which, like other unlettered races, keeps a long memory for faces and a very wide knowledge of personalities. Still better if he has been attached to the traveller by some well-known chief. The *rafiq* must be kept well in evidence and to the fore in case of such a sudden attack as Shakespear experienced at the hands of the Ateibah in Woshm, when a good deal of harm was done before his *rafiq* could make himself known in the night to the raiders. In territories controlled by a central authority, e.g. a sovereign Emir, a well-known man from the centre may suffice throughout; but even then it is better to take a *rafiq* from tribe to tribe. There are one or two denominations of Arabs who are franked by all tribes and can themselves conduct a traveller anywhere in more or less security; but it is rather less than more. Such are the *'Uqeil* (Ageyl)—recognized carriers—and the *Sulubba* (Solubba)—tinkers, medical magicians, hunters—whom no one molests. But travelling with such folk entails the disadvantage that one must go where they wish to go and at their pace; and in disturbed districts near frontiers their aegis is not to be relied upon.

The efficacy of the *rafiq* system is based on the recognition that a particular range or dira (*dirah*) appertains to each tribe, and even to each main section of a tribe. Tribes sometimes hold their diras in common, as the 'Ajmán and Beni Khálid are said to do at present in